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OUTLINES OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

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FOREWORD

THE following pages contain the substance of a series of lectures delivered by the author to City men. They do not profess to be a work of original research; rather do they aim at presenting the intelligent layman with a fair statement of the more important results already established and generally accepted in the sphere of Biblical scholarship.

W. J. F.

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OUTLINES OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

I

INTRODUCTORY

To attempt to give an adequate account of the results of modern Biblical criticism, even within the narrow compass of these outlines, is to enter upon a great task; but arduous as the enterprise is, it is one which, especially at the present time, may well be undertaken. Not that there do not exist already a large number of works dealing with the subject; but most of these, however valuable and important they may be, are generally too technical or too extensive to meet the requirements of those who, not having the opportunity of making a special study of the subject, do yet desire to be informed upon it. At the same time in the wider spread of such information lies the best hope of removing the misconceptions of those results and of the methods by which they have been reached, as well as of allaying the fears and suspicions of those who view with disfavour the

bare notion of applying any kind of criticism to so sacred a volume as the Bible.

To such a review of the results of Biblical criticism as we propose to make there must naturally be limits. It will be impossible to discuss any but a small selection of the matters which, in a complete survey, would demand discussion. We shall, consequently, aim at dealing with the more prominent problems which to-day face the student of the Bible; and in so doing, we shall hope to clear up some obscurities, remove some misapprehensions and prejudices, and not only quicken a livelier interest in the subject, but also stimulate a greater enthusiasm for that wonderful collection of writings which are unique in the literature of the world.

It is necessary at the very outset of our undertaking that we should take account of the great revolution which in modern times has been effected in men's manner of thinking of the world and of life. We are, no doubt, profoundly impressed by the material progress which has been achieved in modern times: with the triumphs of science, the extension of the range of physical knowledge, the application of this knowledge in new inventions to the increase of man's power over natural forces, and the consequent enhancement of the comforts and amenities of our every-

day life. But even these achievements, startling and brilliant as they are, are less significant than the radical change in man's outlook upon the world. That change is summed up in the term 'Evolution', and especially in that particular Theory of Evolution associated with the great name of Darwin. *The Origin of Species,* in which the theory was set forth, was published in 1859; and, during the seventy years that have since elapsed, slowly but surely that theory has altered our conception of Man's place in Nature as profoundly as the Copernican Theory altered men's conception of the earth's relation to the universe at large. We have now generally come to accept the teaching that Man is, physiologically at least, descended from a remote ape-like ancestor, and that even his present mental and moral supremacy has been achieved by him only through long and arduous struggle.

Such a view of Man's origin and development certainly presents a sharp contrast to the account of his creation which meets us in Genesis. The story of the Garden of Eden gives us the picture of the first man as living in a state of innocence, happiness and perfection, from which, by an act of disobedience to God, he fell into a state of sin and misery. Instead of an ascent from a life, which, to quote Hobbes, was 'solitary, poor,

nasty, brutish and short', we here have the story of a fall from a life of idyllic blessedness. The cumulative force of the evidence of comparative anatomy is not to be gainsaid; man, at least as to his bodily nature, must be held to be allied to 'the beasts that perish.'

To those who do not recognize the real character of the Genesis story such an admission appears to invalidate the authority of the Bible, and to convict it of putting forth as true something which is not true. This would be serious enough if we did not bear in mind, not only that truth may be conveyed under various forms, but also that there is a truth of idea as well as a truth of fact. The story of the Garden of Eden is not a unique or isolated narrative peculiar to Hebrew literature. It is one of a number of myths, common to the Semitic stock, which are much older than the Book of Genesis, and which are known to us in their Babylonian form from the clay tablets in the British Museum. It is not necessary to suppose that these early myths were borrowed directly from Babylonia during the Exile; they may very well have been derived long previously from the inhabitants of Canaan, who, we know, had been for centuries under Babylonian influence.

What is certainly clear is the freedom of

Genesis from the gross and polytheistic details which characterize the Babylonian myths all through. Some relics of these details may still be traced in the Bible; they linger on at intervals in its pages,* very much as those rudimentary organs which have been inherited from man's animal ancestors still survive within the human body.

We are bound to consider what existing materials an early Hebrew writer might be supposed to possess, who wished to supply his fellows with an answer to their questions about the creation of the world and the origin of evil. We ought not to wave aside all such considerations on the single plea that the writer was 'inspired'; for, whatever the process of inspiration may involve, it is never independent of some human knowledge, and, in the particular instance before us, we have seen that the Biblical writings do contain references to such early material. Indeed, it is important to insist that the enquiry into literary

* In the Babylonian Creation-myth Marduk, the god of light (one of many gods born of chaos), is the creator of the world through conflict with Tiâmat, the primeval female sea-monster, and the dragon with his helpers. Marduk cleaves Tiâmat in two, and out of the one half he makes the firmament of heaven, and out of the other half he makes the earth. References to this myth may be seen still to survive in Job xix. 13; xxvi. 12 *f.*; Ps. lxxxix. 10 *f.*; Is. xxvii. 1; xxx. 7; li. 9; and Rev. xii. 7 *ff.*

origins should not be precluded by our holding any particular *a priori* theory of inspiration. Again, if it is objected, as it often is, that the Biblical account fails to provide a scientific explanation of the world or of man's place in it, we may well urge in reply that it would be ludicrous to expect such an explanation in the first stages of the history of mankind. What the writer did was, as the evidence shows, to work upon the primitive ideas and records of his race; and we see how he treated them. The fantastic and unworthy elements of Babylonian mythology are all omitted; and if we believe at all in that Divine guidance of human faculties which inspiration in some way connotes, we may well believe that in this he was divinely guided. Gone is the whole apparatus of demi-gods and demons; the picture of a conflict between the powers of light and darkness with all its grotesque details vanishes; in its stead is the simple, majestic statement: 'In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth.' Even if the conception of GOD implied in Genesis is inadequate, it is still infinitely superior to that which meets us generally elsewhere in ancient and pagan mythology. To do it justice, we should compare it, not with modern conceptions of GOD, but with those which are found amongst nations contemporary with the

early Hebrew writers. Though still intensely anthropomorphic, it was yet, so to speak, provisional, and preparatory to the higher and more spiritual conception which becomes more and more apparent in the Psalms, the Prophets and the Gospels. The Bible itself is thus witness to the evolution of religious thought, as indeed the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews implies when he says: 'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son' (Heb. i. 1, 2). We ought, in the light of greater knowledge, to be willing to part with pre-conceived notions of the nature of the inspiration of the Genesis records; to be as ready to admit the inadequacy of their religious, as we are of their scientific, categories; and to recognize the principle that religious truth may yet be conveyed under various forms, even though those forms may include myth and folk-lore and fable.

On the other hand, there is no excuse for dismissing these early narratives as being of little value to us; they are on a high moral and spiritual plane; they contain truth in idea; they are rich in moral and spiritual teaching. After all, the interest of their authors culminates in Man as the end of creation; it is Man's origin, nature and

destiny which are their main theme. Both his relation to the earth out of which he was formed —there is no element in his bodily organism which does not occur in inorganic nature—and his relation to God Who formed him, are clearly described.

In the story of the Garden of Eden the nature of sin and the course of temptation are illustrated in a manner which, while it cannot but make its appeal to the unsophisticated imagination, contains elements of psychological and religious truth of imperishable value. To fix attention exclusively, in dull, unintelligent literalism, on the mythical element, and to lose sight of the living, spiritual element, is to betray both a lamentable attitude of mind and a curious incompetence to understand the method of divine revelation as a gradual process.

It is worth while remarking that some, at least, of those who reject the Genesis narratives appear to imagine, not only that they were the discoverers of some new and fatal objection to the Bible as containing any divine revelation at all, but also that, being the sole possessors of common sense, they alone had the courage to apply it. The ignorance implied in such notions has an almost pathetic character. It is well to recall the fact that there was a great Christian

writer, Origen, who flourished about seventeen hundred years ago, and who was perhaps the greatest student of the Bible who ever lived. Among the many other Biblical matters to which he turned his attention, and on which he exercised his acute intellect and wide learning, were these very Genesis narratives. And he anticipated, and in his own way met, the sort of criticism to which we have referred. Let us hear what he has to say. 'Will any man of sense,' he writes, 'suppose that there was a first day, and a second, and a third, evening and morning, without sun and moon and stars? . . . And who is so silly as to imagine that GOD, like a husbandman, planted a garden in Eden eastward, and put in it a tree of life . . . so that whoever tasted of the fruit with his bodily teeth received the gift of life, and further, that any one, as he masticated the fruit of this tree, partook of good and evil? '*

It is true that Origen's explanation of the narratives is not the same as that which is now given; but that is not the point. The point is that the objections urged, under the plea of common sense, against Genesis are no new thing. They were considered, and replied to, in the earliest ages of the history of Biblical scholarship. Criticism of the Bible has thus been carried on, we may say,

* *Philocal.* i. 17 (trans. Rev. George Lewis).

within the Church itself ever since there was a Bible at all.

Most people are familiar with the term, 'Biblical criticism.' It is unfortunate that the noun 'criticism', and especially the verb, 'criticize', often carry with them in their common usage a suggestion of some degree of hostility to what is being thus reviewed. In this way we speak of criticizing a book or a sermon, a political policy or a piece of conduct; an attitude almost of censure seems already assumed. But when reference is made to Biblical criticism as carried out by competent scholars, any such implied suggestion ought at once to be dismissed from the mind. All that is then meant by the term is the careful and judicial examination of what the Bible itself contains.

There are two kinds of such criticism:

1.—There is, first, Textual criticism, by which is denoted the examination of the actual words of the text of the Bible; the patient, studious endeavour, by comparison of MSS. and otherwise, to arrive, if possible, at the very words used by the original writers.

2.—And there is that which is called 'Higher' criticism. The word, 'higher', has here no ethical signification; it does not connote anything either morally better or intellectually superior. It

assumes that the work of the textual critic has been accomplished; and on the basis of the best ascertainable text the 'higher' critic enters upon his special task. He deals with such questions as the origin, date, and authorship* of the several books; he analyses their contents, judges of their literary character and of the nature of the ideas which they express, and he places them, so far as the evidence is decisive, in their historical setting. In a word, 'higher' criticism is, in the main, literary criticism.

It is obvious that a different kind of mental or educational equipment is necessary in each case. The work of textual criticism of the Bible can be successfully carried out only by those who are learned in Hebrew and Greek; the work of literary criticism, on the other hand, though it cannot be entirely independent of the knowledge of these languages, requires logical rather than linguistic ability; its exponents ought to be men of wide literary experience and historical knowledge, free from intellectual or other bias, and capable of weighing evidence wisely and well. Few of us are competent textual critics, but everybody who forms an opinion on the

* In the case of the O.T. these questions can be determined, if at all, only from internal evidence, since there is no entirely satisfactory or conclusive external evidence.

authorship and contents of a book is, to that extent, a higher critic.

The following chapters, although they will contain instances of each of these two kinds of Biblical criticism, will for the most part deal with matters which belong to the domain of literary criticism.

II

CRITICISM: TEXTUAL AND LITERARY

I.—TEXTUAL criticism aims at determining two main issues:

(i) Whether a particular passage or word is genuine; that is, whether it ought to be in the Bible at all; and (ii) which of the two or more various readings, occurring in different MSS, and both having a claim to be admitted to the text, is to be preferred. Let us take well-known illustrations of both kinds.

(i) (*a*) In John viii. 1-11 we have the story of the Woman taken in Adultery. There is nothing in A.V. to indicate that its genuineness is doubtful, or that it may form no part of the original Fourth Gospel. In R.V. it is placed within brackets. A marginal note explains why this has been done; it states; 'Most of the ancient authorities omit John vii. 53–viii. 11. Those which contain it vary much from each other.' The examination of these authorities thus makes it doubtful whether the

passage ought to be included in the text of the Gospel.

(*b*) A more drastic result of the criticism of the Text is reached in the entire exclusion of 1 John v. 7. This verse reads in A.V.: 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.' The eighth verse continues, 'And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood.' The seventh verse does not appear at all in R.V. where the passage reads: 'For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.' It will be observed that not only has the whole of the seventh verse been omitted, but also the words 'in earth', from the eighth verse in A.V. The omission is justified by the fact that the inserted words (ver. 7) occur in none of the Greek MSS. on which the correct text would be based; they were indeed entirely unknown until late in the fourth century. Textual criticism accordingly rejects them.*

(ii) We pass on to the second case, where textual criticism decides which of two or more readings is to be preferred. Our first instance is taken from the O.T. And here it is proper to

* They are omitted from the Epistle for the First Sunday after Easter in the Amended P.B.

observe that the textual criticism of the O.T. differs in many respects from that of the N.T. Hebrew MSS. of the O.T., compared with those of the N.T., are of much later date, and, unlike the N.T. MSS., which are of three or four distinct types, they are all of one type, and are based on a revision, known as the Massoretic text, which was made during the course of several centuries and not finally completed before the tenth century A.D. This itself was reached by a process of textual criticism, carried out, however, by editors who, according to our standards of accuracy, would certainly be regarded as 'uncritical'. The Greek version of the O.T., known as the Septuagint, which was made from the Hebrew in the course of the third and second centuries B.C. is to be found, wholly or in part, together with the N.T., in our oldest MSS.; and it affords evidence of great value in helping to determine the original Hebrew text. Speaking generally, we may say that O.T. textual criticism consists largely of the recent conjectural emendations of scholars.

(*a*) It must suffice to give a single instance of textual variation in the Hebrew O.T. In Is. ix. 3, A.V. reads, 'Thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy; they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.' The general sense of

the passage makes us suspect that 'not'.* Instead of 'not', however, the margin has the alternative, 'to him'. When we turn to R.V. we see that this passage reads: 'Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy, etc.' The 'not' is now relegated to the margin, where the note states: 'Another reading is, thou didst not increase the joy.' The explanation of the variation lies in the fact that there are in the Hebrew two words of similar sound but of different spelling. They may both be pronounced *lô;* but the one means 'not', and the other means 'to him'; and the meaning of the passage will of course be determined by which of the two is read. There is, however, no doubt which reading the R.V. prefers.

(*b*) On turning to the N.T. we are confronted with an immense number of various readings, due to the existence of a very large number of MSS.—to say nothing of the many quotations from the N.T. which occur in the writings of the Fathers. In the face of such a multitude of more or less divergent readings it might seem almost absurd for us here to select any particular one, were it not that a typical instance is called for. In

* Its incongruity is glaring enough as we listen to the passage when it is read on Christmas Day in the course of the First Lesson at Matins.

Mark vi. 20 we read (A.V.) that when Herod heard John the Baptist, 'he did many things'; the margin has no alternative to this. R.V. has 'When he heard him he was much perplexed', with a marginal note: 'Many ancient authorities read, did many things.' It is evident that the criticism of the text based of course on the examination of the MSS.—has resulted in the preference of the reading preserved in R.V. to that preserved in A.V., some Greek MSS. having *ĕpoiei,* 'he did', but the more trustworthy having *ēporei,* 'he was at a loss'.

II.—We pass on now to consider some of the well-known instances of literary criticism of the O.T.

(*a*) We take first the story of Creation, as it is narrated in Genesis i. and ii. We say, 'the story', but in point of fact there are two stories, as is at once evident to anyone carefully reading these chapters. The first is contained in Gen. i. to ii. 4^a; the second in Gen. ii. 4^b to the end of the chapter. One need not be a scholar to observe how profoundly these two accounts differ from one another. It was pointed out long ago* that each account is distinguished from the other by

* By Jean Astruc (1753), who showed how this distinctive use of the divine names characterized whole sections of the Pentateuch.

the particular name which it employs to denote the Creator. In the first He is invariably called 'GOD' *Elohim,* and in the second, 'the LORD GOD' (the LORD = *Jahveh* which we commonly read as Jehovah). It was this difference of Divine names which gave the first clue to that diversity of sources or documents which is characteristic of the whole Pentateuch.

Starting from this difference of Divine names we may go on to observe a large number of other differences not only in the contents of each of these Creation-stories, but also in their point of view. Especially impressive is their difference of literary style, of method and form, of choice of words and turn of phrase; all of which is sufficiently apparent even in the English translation. The inevitable inference is that we are here dealing with two documents embodying a twofold tradition.

(*b*) When we examine the Story of the Flood, a similar phenomenon meets us. Here also we have two accounts of the same event; each, as in the Creation-story, distinguished from the other by a different name for GOD. In the one account which belongs to the Priestly Code (described below) GOD is 'Elohim', in the other He is 'Jahveh'. Moreover, though both describe the catastrophe of a universal deluge, they differ in

matters of detail. In the Elohist narrative Noah is bidden to take two of every sort of living thing, a male and a female, into the ark (Gen. vi. 19); in the Jahvist narrative he is bidden to take 'of every clean beast . . . seven and seven, the male and his female; and of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female;' (Gen. vii. 2). Again, the Elohist narrative represents the duration of the flood as a hundred and fifty days (Gen. vii. 24); the Jahvist gives it no longer than forty days (Gen. vii. 17).

There are many other differences between the two accounts both of detail and of literary expression which need not be mentioned here; they all serve still further to confirm the inference already drawn: that we here have before us not one homogeneous narrative written by a single author, but two separate narratives which have subsequently been combined by an editor, or, as it is the custom to speak of him in this relation, a redactor; who, in so doing, has not deemed it necessary, as a modern author might, to produce a narrative of his own, based on their common authority and purged of their incompatible details.

(*c*) Another instance of a double, and even triple, narrative occurs in the accounts given of the origin of the name Isaac. The name itself

means 'laughter'; there is no question about that; the question is how the child came by such a name. In Gen. xvii. 17 it is Abraham who laughs at the notion of a child's being born of parents as advanced in age as he and Sarah then were; in Gen xviii. 12 it is Sarah who laughs for the same reason. Later on, Gen. xxi. 6, Sarah's laughter is one of triumph in her maternity. These discrepancies are at once accounted for when it is recognized that each of the passages belongs to a different document or source.

(*d*) A most interesting instance of the analysis of the one composite narrative into its two elements is afforded by the examination of the Story of Joseph's being sold into Egypt. Careful analysis shows that the one narrative consists of Gen. xxxvii. 12-21, 25-27, 28*b*, 31-35; and that the other consists of Gen. xxxvii. 22-24, 28*a*, *c*, 29, 30, 36.

According to the first account Jacob* sends Joseph to bring him news of the brethren. Joseph finds them at last in Dothan. Seeing 'this dreamer' approach, they propose to kill him and to cast his dead body into a pit, and afterwards to say that an evil beast had devoured him (Gen. xxxvii. 19 *f.*). Reuben (it seems, perhaps, that we ought to here to read Judah') will be no party

* Here called 'Israel'.

to the murderous plot, and protects Joseph from the rest. They then sit down to a meal, and at once observe a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants coming to them. Judah, alive to the opportunity of turning the situation to pecuniary advantage, proposes to sell Joseph to them, and in the end Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

But in the second account we have parallel but different details. According to this, the brethren having cast Joseph into the pit at Reuben's instigation, apparently abandon him to his fate. It is then that 'Midianites, merchantmen',—not Ishmaelites, as in the first account—passed by (ver. 28); and it was they who 'drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit', and who subsequently 'sold him into Egypt, unto Potiphar' (ver. 36).

Thus, in the one account Judah takes the lead, and it is in compliance with his proposal that the brethren sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites; in the other account Reuben is the spokesman; it is he who suggests their casting Joseph into the pit; while all the time intending to return and rescue him and restore him to his father; but, on returning to the pit, he is in despair at finding it empty —the Midianites having in the meantime discovered Joseph, in the absence of the brethren, and carried him off to Egypt. In the former case,

the sale of Joseph is a transaction between the brethren and the Ishmaelites; in the latter between the Midianites and Potiphar. Obviously we have here two traditions represented by two documents which have undergone 'conflation' into a single, yet still composite, narrative.

The general result of the careful and scholarly analysis of the Pentateuch* broadly stated, is to establish the existence of the four main documents of which these books are composed:

1.—The Priestly Code (alluded to as P), which is the 'framework' of the whole. It is so called because it is largely occupied with details of ritual worship. In literary style it is precise, formal and legally technical; in it are included, amongst other passages, the final chapters of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, and most of Numbers. The section Lev. xvii.–xxvi., contained within it and probably an older document, is known as 'The Law of Holiness.' P is generally admitted to be the latest of the four main documents, and to date after the Exile.

2.—The Jahvist document (J). This is a work of gradual growth during a long course of years. It appears to preserve the traditions of the southern kingdom of Judah; it embodies comparatively primitive religious ideas, and it implies a people

* Or, including the book of Joshua, the Hexateuch.

living by agriculture and in a state of society of greater simplicity than that implied by P, both as regards social customs and ritual practices.

3.—The Elohist document (E). This, on the other hand, is in origin to be referred to the northern kingdom of Israel. The generally accepted date for J is *circ.* 850 B.C., that for E *circ.* 750 B.C.

Both J and E contain common matter; in many cases they traverse the same ground. Hence it was not long before they were combined into one continuous text JE (*circ.* 700 B.C.). But they were not completely fused, although in many passages it is impossible to analyze the text with certainty; they were not, however, employed simply as raw material, after the manner of a modern historian who makes use of his authorities in order to produce his own narrative. This is the explanation of the parallelisms and discrepancies of which an instance has already been given in the story of Joseph.

4.—The Deuteronomic Code (D). This consists of Deut. v.–xxvi. If, as is probable, it was the law-book found by Hilkiah in the house of the LORD (*cp.* 2 Kings xxii. 8) in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, *i.e.*, 621 B.C., then its posterior date is determined; that its composition is not earlier than the seventh century B.C. is clear from the internal evidence of the book itself. The

traditional opinion which ascribes the actual authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy to Moses cannot therefore be sustained; and although Sir Thomas Browne, in his quaintly ironical manner, says that Moses 'hath outgone' all who 'have endeavoured to write the history of their own lives' in having 'left not only the story of his life, but, as some will have it, of his death also', yet no one, we think, will seriously maintain that Moses wrote the account of his own death which is recorded in Deut. xxxiv. D's description of the covenant at Horeb (D's name for Sinai) which is limited to the Ten Words (Deut. iv. 13; v. 22) is obviously incompatible with the account of it given in Exodus. There is much in the Book besides to supply evidence of its comparatively late date: *e.g.*, its frequently-repeated phrases, 'at that time' and 'unto this day', imply the lapse of a long interval between the occurrence of the events narrated and the written narrative; the statement (c. xxxiv. 10) 'there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses' points to the same conclusion. Moreover, since the writer invariably uses the expression 'beyond Jordan' to indicate Eastern Palestine (*cp.* Deut. iv. 47, 49 R.V.), the necessary inference is that he himself was resident in Western Palestine, where Moses never was.

As far, then, as the Pentateuch or the Hexateuch

is concerned, analysis reveals the existence of four main documents belonging to successive stages of the national history and differing from one another, as we shall proceed to show, both in religious ideas and in legislative character. Of these the earliest are J and E, (*circ.* 850-750 B.C.); next comes D (*circ.* 650 B.C.); and finally P (*circ.* 500 B.C.).

Such a result cannot but be a little confusing to the ordinary reader of the Bible who naturally assumes that what comes first in order is earliest in origin; whereas the first chapter of Genesis is contained in P, the latest of the documents. Nor is this the only assumption which literary criticism has disproved; for it has shown that our modern conception of authorship, under which a work is ascribed to a particular writer only when he himself has written it, must be profoundly modified when it is applied to the books of the Bible. This we shall endeavour to illustrate further in what follows.

III

THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION

THE popular, uncritical view of the Pentateuch is, as we know, that Moses wrote the whole work; but if the literary criticism which has been briefly outlined is to be trusted—as, on the whole, it must be—then none of the main documents, as they appear in their final form in the Pentateuch, is older than the ninth century B.C., while the most extensive document, the Priestly Code (P) belongs to the period following the Captivity. This is not to say that there are no elements of more ancient date preserved within these writings. Such elements are the ancient commandments and regulations first promulgated by Moses himself,* and the primitive myths already referred to, as well as the fragments and survivals of national poetry, exemplified in the Song of Deborah, David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan, etc. Israelite writers in the ninth and eighth centuries

* The relation of the Mosaic Law to the Code of Hammurabi (*circ.* 2250 B.C.) raises problems into which we need not go.

B.C. must have had some such materials upon which to work as other early historians have had to depend upon: annals, folk-lore, tribal traditions and ballads, as well as moral and ritual laws and customs.

Although, as is clear, we must give up the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, we do not, and cannot regard Moses himself as unhistorical, mythical or fictitious. He stands forth for all times as the founder of the Jewish nation, as the commanding genius, who, like Solon at Athens, first gave law and organized institutions to a people in its childhood. It was he whose splendid achievement it was to convert a mere horde of runaway slaves into a nation conscious of its unity and inspired with a sense of its high and unique destiny. And the basis of that achievement lay in the religion which he taught them. For other races and other tribes there might exist other gods; but for Israel there was only one GOD to be worshipped: Jahveh was Israel's GOD and Israel was Jahveh's people.

Moses comes upon the stage of world-history towards the end of the thirteenth century B.C. In the Canaan to which he led them, the Israelitish people came into contact with a civilization of Babylonian origin, and with a religion in which many gods were recognized. They were sur-

rounded by conditions inimical to their pristine faith; they were always tending to fall into the polytheism, both ancient and widespread, in the midst of which they lived. Efforts to recall them from such decline were made from time to time, especially by the Prophets, that remarkable succession of great leaders, both national and religious, who were inspired with a more spiritual conception of GOD and taught a nobler monotheism. We read of religious reforms under Hezekiah, and of a still more effective reformation under Josiah. But in the end, first the northern kingdom, and then the southern, were overrun by Assyria and Babylon, and the people were carried away into captivity. During and after the Exile, when the political independence of Israel as a nation was submerged, the activities of its religious leaders were mainly directed to the elaboration of ritual regulations.

When the 'Books of Moses' are examined in the light of these various phases in the history of Israel, they are seen to consist, not of a homogeneous law-book, the work of one legislator in one age, but of several legal codes, founded upon an ancient basis, and exhibiting a development of civil and religious legislation parallel with the changing conditions of the national life.

So large a statement cannot be substantiated

with completeness within our limits, but we shall endeavour to give such instances in support of it as will serve to illustrate its truth. For this purpose we select three subjects of Pentateuchal legislation in which differences are apparent when the codes are compared.

1.—*The Ten Commandments.*

The Ten Commandments were given to Israel by Moses on Mount Sinai; such is the broad fact we learn from the history recorded in Exodus. But when we examine the text, we find important variations on this main theme. Our examination of some of the stories in Genesis has shown us that the narratives there contained have been compiled from different sources, or that they are based on different documents. We have a further instance of this method in the narrative of the occurrences at Sinai. Once again we shall observe how the sequence of events, as recorded in one source, is interrupted by the insertion of matter, often of a parallel nature, derived from another source, and while necessarily dealing only with the main outlines of the narrative, we shall indicate the sources of its various sections as literary criticism has revealed them.

We begin with the encampment of Israel before Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 2). From the camp Moses goes up to God, Who gives him a message

to the people. It is of the nature of a covenant; on condition of their obedience to GOD's voice they shall be to him 'a peculiar treasure', 'a kingdom of priests', and 'a holy nation'. On receiving this message from Moses, the people promise obedience. There is now a further instruction to the people to prepare themselves for a visible descent of the LORD upon Mount Sinai on the third day. The Theophany takes place with tremendous physical accompaniments; thunders and lightnings, a thick cloud, the voice of the trumpet in a long continued *crescendo,* fire, smoke and earthquake. This section (Exod. xix. 2-19) belongs in the main to E.

A J section of six verses (Exod. xix. 20 to end) parallel to the above, interrupts the E section which is resumed at Exod. xx. 1, and continues to verse 21. This E section contains the Ten Commandments, which are said to be uttered by GOD; so that, omitting the J section, and reading c. xix. 19, and following on immediately with c. xx. 1 we have: 'GOD answered him (Moses) by a voice; and GOD spake all these words, saying': the Ten Commandments as we commonly understand that term.

It is probable that they originally existed in a simpler form, each commandment being comprised in a single sentence: 'Thou shalt have

none other gods before me': 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image': 'Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain': 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy': 'Honour thy father and thy mother': 'Thou shalt do no murder': 'Thou shalt not commit adultery': 'Thou shalt not steal': 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour': 'Thou shalt not covet.'

The Ten Commandments of Exod. xx. are repeated in Deut. v. 6-21. It will be remarked that in this later version a different ground for the observance of the sabbath is given from that of Exodus. There is in the Deuteronomic decalogue no reference to GOD's resting after the six days' work of creation, but to the deliverance from Egyptian slavery—'therefore the LORD thy GOD commanded thee to keep the sabbath day' (Deut. v. 15). The writer continues: 'These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly . . . and he added no more' (ver. 22).

Now it may come as a surprise to some to learn that the book of Exodus also contains (c. xxxiv. 14-28) an entirely different set of Ten Commandments. In order to elucidate this statement, let us return to the narrative.

The narrative of events is resumed in c. xxiv. 1, 2; (the intervening matter of c. xx. 22–c. xxiii.,

comprising what is known as the 'Book of the Covenant' [*cp.* Exod. xxiv. 7], together with its sequel in c. xxiv. 3-8, belongs to J). Moses once again is said to go up into the mount where he remains for forty days and forty nights (c. xxiv. 18). We now have a long section of ritual ordinances intercalated in cc. xxv.–xxxi., which is obviously of much later origin, and which, indeed, belongs to the Priestly Code (P). When, after this lengthy parenthesis, the narrative is again resumed, we learn that, in the absence of Moses on the Mount, the people have turned to the worship of the golden calf (c. xxxii. 8). Moses, on descending from the mount and perceiving this, in his anger dashes to the ground and breaks the two tables of stone (Exod. xxxii. 19) on which, written with the 'finger of GOD', were the ten commandments. On the morrow Moses returns to the LORD (Exod. xxxii. 30, 31) and is bidden by Him to hew two tables of stone like unto the first: 'and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables' (c. xxxiv. 1). Later on in the chapter we learn that it was Moses who was bidden to write the commandments: 'Write thou these words' (ver. 27). 'And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments' (ver. 28). It is clear from the context that the ten commandments,

here mentioned, are not those of c. xx.; but those of this thirty-fourth chapter, which, as we shall see, are essentially different. The ten commandments of c. xx. are a moral code, those of c. xxxiv. are a ritual code, in the main: 'Thou shalt worship no other god'; 'Thou shalt make thee no molten gods'; 'The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep'; 'All that openeth the womb is mine'; 'Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day shalt thou rest.' The remaining commandments deal with feasts and offerings, ending with 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.' Thus we have a double set of 'Ten Words'; and although that contained in Exod. xxxiv. is represented, both in Exod. xxxiv. 28 and in Deut. x. 4, as reproducing that of Exod. xx., the two sets differ essentially in character.*

No one, we think, possessing what may be called a 'literary sense', can read the narrative of the events and the legislation of Sinai as it stands in Exodus, without perceiving its extremely complex character. It is only when it is analysed, when its elements are disentangled, and when it

* 'If we ask which of these discrepant versions of the Decalogue is older, the answer cannot be doubtful. . . . All probability is in favour of the view that the moral version of the Decalogue . . . was later than the ritual version.' Sir J. G. Frazer, *Folk Lore in the O.T.* iii. 115.

is recognized as a compilation of documents of different dates and originating under different historical conditions that it becomes intelligible.

2.—*The Place of Sacrifice.*

In the earliest of the legislative codes, the Book of the Covenant already mentioned, it is clearly recognized that sacrifices are to be offered in many places. 'An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me and shalt sacrifice thereon. . . . In every place where I record My name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee' (Exod. xx. 24). The law of Deuteronomy is in direct opposition to this; for it allows only one place where sacrifice may be done; thus: 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings' (Deut. xii. 14; *cp.* Lev. xvii. 8, 9). Moreover, the very form in which the restriction to one place is laid down in this law does imply that sacrifices had previously been offered 'in every place'. The new law was obviously of the nature of a reformation.

When we compare the recorded history of the people with these mutually contradictory injunctions, we find that up to the seventh century B.C. altars were built and sacrifices were offered up in many places, *e.g.*, in Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, Beth-

lehem, etc. The historian gives not the slightest hint that those who offered sacrifices in these different places were doing so in disobedience to any law, or that there was any law in existence at the time to forbid so general, and, at its origin, so laudable a practice; indeed, it is part of Elijah's complaint to GOD that 'the children of Israel have . . . thrown down Thine altars' (1 Kings xix. 14).

It is when we come to the times of Hezekiah (*circ.* 720 B.C.), and Josiah (*circ.* 640), that we find the enforcement of the restriction of sacrifice to one place, Jerusalem, as a measure against the prevalence of idolatry and its attendant vices at the local shrines. If then Josiah carried out his reformation, as he is stated to have done, 'according to all the law of Moses' (2 Kings xxiii. 25), the law so referred to, could not have been that contained in Exod. xx. 24; it must have been that contained in the newly discovered law-book of Hilkiah, the Deuteronomic Code. This inference is amply borne out by a comparison of Deuteronomy with 2 Kings xxiii.

3.—*The Priesthood.*

We shall briefly consider two main questions which arise in relation to the priesthood: (i) Who were qualified to be priests? (ii) Where were they settled?

(i) The Book of the Covenant, although it lays down regulations for making altars (Exod. xx. 24 *ff.*), contains no reference to a special order set apart as priests to offer sacrifice;* indeed the history of the times to which this code belongs records the offering of sacrifices even by those who were not priests, *e.g.*, Gideon, Manoah, Saul, David, etc. In Deuteronomy the tribe of Levi are set apart for the ministry of sacred things; the service of the LORD is their peculiar function, and all Levites have the privilege of exercising the priesthood. In the Priestly Code, on the other hand, only Levites of the family of Aaron are to officiate as priests, while the 'Levite', *i.e.*, he of the tribe of Levi who does not belong to that family, is now a mere menial, the servant of the Aaronic priest, sharply distinguished from him, with entirely subordinate and inferior functions.

(ii) In Deuteronomy the Levite has no rightful residence. He is a sojourner 'within thy gates', i.e., in cities possessed by others, 'he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee'. Like the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, he is the object of charity (Deut. xii. 18 *f.*; xiv. 27-29). But according to P the Levites

* It would appear that Moses was sole priest. (*cp.* Exod. xxiv. 4 *f.*, xxxiii. 7-11.)

have settled possessions; forty-eight cities are alloted to them with their suburbs (Num. xxxv. 7).

Such discrepancies and contradictions are not easily explained under the traditional view; still less are they to be explained away. It is, we think, extremely hazardous to assert that a law was in existence at a time when history furnishes no evidence of its operation.* Again, it is difficult to see how contradictory laws could form parts of a uniform legislation promulgated at one and the same time by one and the same lawgiver. That Moses at least laid the foundations of law for the infant nation is reasonably certain, but of what those foundations consisted precisely is uncertain. Stages in the process of legal development are apparent; the Deuteronomic Code is an adaption of old laws to new circumstances, while the Priestly Code is a vastly extended ritual legislation† evolved, as it seems, during the Babylonian captivity, and associated with the reformation under Ezra, as the Deuteronomic Code is connected with the reformation under Josiah. The

* *e.g.* Where were the priests and the Levites when David brought the Ark to Mount Sion? (*cp.* 2 Sam. vi.)

† Thus it contains regulations dealing with the year of jubilee, the great day of atonement, and various kinds of sacrifices—institutions on which the Deuteronomic code is silent.

completed Law, then, dates from the time of Ezra.

Although it has not been possible to do more than treat the subject in barest outline, yet, even so, we think that it will have been made clear that the legislative codes of the Pentateuch reflect different civil and social conditions, and that, as a complex body of law, it shows development from simple origins. Those origins belong to the age when Israel took its rise as a nation under the commanding lead of Moses. The spirit of that first great founder of the nation never departed from Israel, for 'Moses' was for all time to come synonymous with Law. In spite of political growth and in spite of the addition of new enactments, the authority of Moses reigned supreme. No law was regarded as an absolute innovation; no law was thought of as coming into existence in absolute independence of Moses. All law was implicit in Moses. It is a narrow and inconsiderate attitude of mind, therefore, which suggests that, because the Deuteronomic and Priestly Codes were subsequent to Moses and yet were put forth in his name and based upon his authority, either of them was a forgery. His authority was still invoked because he was regarded and venerated as the source and representative of the law of Israel in all ages. Nor let such an argument be hastily

brushed aside as special pleading.* Analogous phenomena present themselves elsewhere in the literature of the O.T. Thus very few of the Psalms—(if any, some critics would add)—were written by David; but as David, the 'sweet singer of Israel', was the traditional founder of the national psalmody, so the name 'David' stood for all psalms. Similarly, not all the Wisdom literature was written by Solomon, yet he was the traditional Wise Man, and his name stood as the typical embodiment and ultimate source of all human wisdom.

* Similarly, while the Law of the Twelve Tables was the first and only legal code of Rome (450 B.C.), yet all Roman law subsequent to that primitive code was considered as the application of the rule of right implicit therein.

IV

PRINCIPLES OF O.T. CRITICISM

It must be admitted by every intelligent reader of the Bible that the books of which it consists are not all at the same spiritual level; that they do not all appeal to the religious consciousness with the same force or authority. If they did, we should react to them all, whatever their character —historical, liturgical, poetical, philosophical or prophetical—with the same intensity of spiritual response; and this we certainly do not. Nor is it merely because we may be told so, that we believe that what we are reading is 'inspired'; what carries conviction of this to us must in the last resort be our own experience. We must know within ourselves that something is being revealed to us from a source which, in a sense, is 'higher' than ourselves; we must with that knowledge be aware of an impression, or an emotion, of a special kind, in which we feel that the words and the ideas they convey are in some way 'greater' than any which our minds, not so illumined,

could achieve. Where this knowledge, this impression, this emotion, are absent the quality of inspiration is not perceived. Not that the perception of the quality creates it; it must first be there in order to be perceived at all; what is meant is that to be real for me, it must be part of my experience.

Such response, then, is not unconditional; it will not occur where either the intelligence or the conscience is offended. When we read that a man was swallowed by a great fish, and lived within its body three days and three nights, even composing a poem in those restricted and incommodious circumstances, we more than hesitate to accept the story as a divinely inspired record of actual occurrences. Again, when we read that it was in accordance with a distinct command from God that the Israelites under Joshua destroyed city after city, massacring both man and woman, young and old, showing no mercy, we repudiate as immoral and demoralizing the conception of God which is implied in such commands. The grotesque and the inhuman can be no part of a purely divine revelation; the fact that such elements find their place in the Bible certainly requires an explanation; but it is both irrational and immoral to insist upon our acceptance of them, or our approval of them, simply because

'they are in the Bible, and the Bible is inspired'.

An explanation, we say, is required. We think it will be found in the recognition of two important principles which the Bible itself establishes:

1. The conception of GOD in the Bible shows a moral and spiritual development.
2. The Bible consists of books—a literature—of very varied character.

1.—It must be evident to every thoughtful reader of the Bible that such knowledge as it gives of GOD in His relation to man was not revealed at the beginning or all at once. Nor could it be, for as Dr. Johnson reminds us in his *Life of Milton*, 'Nobody can be taught faster than he can learn,' and the learning of knowledge concerning GOD is no exception to this. It was no modern apologist, driven into a corner, who said that GOD of old time spoke 'by divers portions and in divers manners' before He made the final revelation 'in His Son' (Heb. i. 1, 2).

The religion of Moses was founded on the belief in One GOD; at first, perhaps, as a tribal god supreme among competing deities; then as absolutely one and alone. He was thought of as 'coming down' upon Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 11); and later, He is said to possess the land of

Canaan as His special inheritance, as David asserts (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), beyond the soil of which, it seems, as the story of Naaman also illustrates (2 Kings v. 17), His presence was not to be found in worship. And this conception of GOD was intensely anthropomorphic; He has a face and eyes, a hand and an arm. He is, as it were, a magnified man. Still, we should be on our guard against exaggerating the literal significance of such anthropomorphic details, especially when we bear in mind how dependent we still are, and necessarily so, upon pictorial and poetical ways of representing GOD.

This vivid personification of GOD did not prevent the development of the idea of His transcending all nature which became so characteristic of Hebrew religion. Where the modern mind would recognize the action of physical forces Israel saw the hand of GOD. In a magnificent passage Deutero-Isaiah proclaims (c. xl. 12 *ff.*) that GOD 'hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.' Before Him 'all nations are as nothing'; He is 'the everlasting GOD, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth,' incomparable and inscrutable. It is in the

latest writings of the O.T., *e.g.*, the Book of Job, that the transcendent majesty of GOD finds noblest expression.

When we turn to consider the representation of what may be called the 'moral' attributes of GOD, we observe, here also, the process of an analogous development. At first, as a tribal deity, He is, in a measure, identified with the tribe; and the actions, which we should describe as being prompted by a ruthless military policy, are described as being directly dictated by GOD. He is represented as being under the sway of human emotions, grief, anger and jealousy, as changing His purpose, and repenting; and although even in comparatively early times we have glimpses of a higher truth (*cp.* 1 Sam. xv. 29) yet it is not till the eighth century before Christ when the great prophetic teachers, Amos, Isaiah and Hosea, arose, that a truer and nobler doctrine of GOD was taught. Then, indeed, was He clearly set forth as the Holy One of Israel, the God of absolute righteousness and unchanging love.

2.—The simple common-place fact that the books of the Bible are all bound up in one volume does tend to conceal the truth that it is a 'library' in itself. In its first pages it contains stories derived from Babylonian myths; it records the origins and the history of Israel, not only in a

narrative dependent on several sources, including extracts from a Book of Jashar (probably a collection of national poems), but also in a compendious and uniform work, 1 and 2 Chronicles, a compilation in which the writer admits his indebtedness to a dozen or more authorities. There are five books of Psalms, 'the hymn-book of the Second Temple'; a wisdom-literature, attributed to Solomon; writings of Prophets. The Book of Job and The Song of Songs are dramas, each with its *dramatis personæ*. Didactive narrative may fitly describe Jonah and Ruth; the early chapters of Daniel also come under this category; while its later chapters are the first specimen of that remarkable and extensive Jewish apocalyptic literature, of which the latest Biblical example is the Apocalypse of John. Of this literature, as exemplified in the Bible, we shall treat in some detail in a subsequent chapter.

With such a vast variety of material we cannot hope here to deal, but we think it may be useful, as well as interesting, by way of illustrating this variety, to examine in some detail one example of didactive narrative in Jonah, and one example of drama in Job.

The story of Jonah was written, it seems, in order to teach in a picturesque manner that wider

conception of GOD's merciful love which the prophets had been so much concerned to set forth. Moreover, the words of Jeremiah (xviii. 7 *f.*) might well stand as a preface to it: 'At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.'

All that is known from Biblical history of 'Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet' is contained in 2 Kings xiv. 25, where he is said to have predicted a reconquest of territory from the Syrians in the reign of Jeroboam II, King of Israel (781-741 B.C.), though the predictions themselves are not extant.

According to the story in the book itself, Jonah, having received a divine command to go to Nineveh and denounce its wickedness, seeks to shirk the mission by embarking at Joppa for Tarshish, an uncertain region in the far West, Italy or Spain. At sea a storm arises and the sailors, having discovered his impious presence to be the cause of the storm, throw him overboard; whereupon he is swallowed by a great fish, which after three days vomits him out upon the dry land. On receiving the divine command a second time, he obeys and goes to Nineveh, where, as a

consequence of his preaching, the whole city, from the king downwards, fast and repent, and are mercifully pardoned by God.

Whatever historical basis of fact the story may rest upon, the story itself is told, not by Jonah, but by a writer who must have lived some three centuries later, at a time when Nineveh had long ceased to exist.* It is significant that the name of the king of Nineveh is not given. The conversion to God of a whole vast population at the preaching of one man seems to take us outside the limits of accurate history; nor is the action of the king in accordance with the picture which history gives us of the monarchs of Assyria. The prayer, or psalm, uttered by Jonah in the fish's belly is hardly appropriate to the situation; it certainly is not original, for it reflects the ideas and echoes the language of psalms of a late date.

Where, then, there is so much in the story that cannot be strictly historical, why should we be required to accept the fish-episode—whether its explanation be legendary or mythical, symbolical or allegorical—as literal fact? And if our Lord's use of the story be urged, that plea seems to us to be quite beside the mark, since in matters of history and tradition, as in matters of natural

* *Comp.* Jonah iii. 3: 'Nineveh *was* an exceeding great city.'

science, He uniformly speaks from the standpoint of His time.*

In the 'drama' of Job the action is confined mainly to the prologue (cc. i. and ii.) and the epilogue (c. xlii. 7 to end), the rest consisting of dialogues between Job and his friends. Though so far dramatic in form, it is, in effect, a philosophical treatise dealing with the perennial problem of innocent suffering. That good men do suffer, that their goodness procures them no immunity from misfortune, has ever been a matter of common experience; that this should be so is a fact against which the common conscience of humanity rebels, for it requires that, if there is to be suffering in the world at all, it ought to fall, not upon the good but upon the evil. This is the view of Job's friends: misfortunes are 'judgements'; where there is suffering, there there is sin. The tragic irony of the situation lies in this, that while Job is conscious of his own integrity of character, his 'comforters' are inwardly convinced that somewhere in his life there must be sin; else, why should all these misfortunes have fallen upon

* It is more than probable that the words of Matt. xii. 40: 'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,' form no part of our Lord's discourse, but are an addition of the Evangelist's. They do not occur in the parallel passage in Luke (c. xi. 30), where all that is said is that Jonah 'became a sign unto the Ninevites'.

him? On the other hand, Job stoutly insists on his own rectitude; until the end, he arraigns the justice of a God Who has brought so many calamities upon him, an innocent man; moreover, how can he plead his cause before One Who has so little regard for goodness? In what dramatic contrast do his candour and boldness stand out against the evasions and commonplaces of his friends!

The philosophical solution suggested by the book is twofold: (i) misfortunes are disciplinary, they are sent as trials; life is probation; (ii) there is in the inscrutable providence of God a larger purpose than finite man can comprehend.

The very subject of the book, as well as its form, are evidence of its late date; philosophical problems do not arise nor are they discussed in literary form, until the religious experience of mankind has reached considerable development. Again, the person of Job himself is unknown to history; the only place in the O.T., outside the Book of Job, where his name is mentioned, is in Ezekiel (c. xiv.), and even there we have nothing but his name. The events recorded in the prologue and epilogue can hardly be regarded as historical. There is a formal regularity about them which seems to be decisive on this point; there is a roundness in the numbers which leads

to the same conclusion: seven sons, three daughters, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses (observe the recurrence of three, five and seven). Job loses all. When the happy ending comes, it is rounded off with a symmetrical completeness: 'the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before' (c. xlii. 10). He now has fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, one thousand she-asses (ver. 12). 'He had also seven sons and three daughters' (ver. 13); 'and after this Job lived an hundred and forty years' (twice seventy), 'and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations.' So Job died, being 'old and full of days'. The drama is ended.

A few words remain to be said about the formation of the Canon, that is, the authoritative completion of the O.T. as a united whole; though it is still regarded by the Jews as consisting of three groups of books of different degrees of sacredness. The ancient title of what we call the O.T. is 'The Law, the Prophets and the Writings' (*cp.* the prologue to Ecclesiasticus), a title which implies definite stages of growth. The whole process extended over several centuries and was not completed until the first century of the Christian era. The 'Torah', or Law, which

comprised the 'Books of Moses', was the first Canon, dating from the time of Ezra (444 B.C.); to the Jews it was ever the most sacred group, a 'Holy of Holies'. The formation of the second Canon, which now included with the Law the historical books ('the former prophets') and the three greater prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—and the twelve minor prophets, was not completed till nearly two centuries later.

It is obvious that the general acceptance and veneration of any book must have preceded its inclusion in any Canon; and there were in existence, or were being produced in the course of time, outside the Canon of the Law and the Prophets, various works, which were claiming recognition and admission. These were 'the Writings', the final group of our O.T. To most of these a greater antiquity than they really possessed came naturally to be ascribed to them; some won their place only after much debate.

V

THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

HITHERTO we have been concerned almost exclusively with the O.T. We now turn to the N.T. in order to deal with what is known as the Synoptic Problem. Many volumes have been written giving various solutions of this problem of literary criticism; it will not be expected that a complete review can here be made of so large a literature; but, at least, it will be possible to explain what the problem is and how it arises, as well as to state in outline what is its most generally accepted solution.

Few readers of the Four Gospels, can, we imagine, fail to observe the remarkable differences which exist between the Fourth Gospel and the three others. These differences are apparent both as regards what is peculiar to it and what is absent from it. The three confine our Lord's ministry almost exclusively to Galilee; the fourth places the chief scenes of it in Jerusalem and its immediate neighbourhood. It introduces new persons,

notably Nicodemus and Lazarus. It gives us no parable, but a series of similitudes, the Shepherd, the Vine, the Door, etc. It represents our Lord, not as gradually revealing His Messiahship, but as proclaiming it from the first. It omits all account of His Birth and Infancy, of the Temptation and the Transfiguration, and of the actual institution of the Eucharist; omissions explained on the hypothesis that it supplements the three others, which were already in existence and current in Christian circles. It possesses many other distinctive features which we need not here specify; enough will have been said, we think, to make the point clear.

When now we examine the three other Gospels, we observe, not only that each of them differs from John, but that they have a considerable amount of agreement among themselves. They are written on one plan, and John on another. They agree in a common, connected view, or conspectus, of our Lord's life and ministry. Hence they are termed the 'Synoptic' Gospels. Moreover, they exhibit close resemblances in language, even identities of words and phrases, where they record the same event, or report the same sayings. Here are some instances:

Mark ii. 23-26

And it came to pass that He was going on the sabbath day through

the cornfields; and His disciples began as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of GOD, when Abiathar was high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?

Matt. xii. 1-4

At that season Jesus went on the sabbath day through the cornfields; and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck ears of corn, and to eat. But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath. But He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of GOD, and did eat the shewbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests?

Luke vi. 1-4

Now it came to pass on a sabbath, that He was going through the cornfields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. But certain of the Pharisees said, Why do ye that which it is not lawful to do on the sabbath day? And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read even this, what David did, when he was an hungred, he and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of GOD and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, save for the priests alone?

Mark viii. 27-29

And Jesus went forth, and His

disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi: and in the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they told Him, saying, John the Baptist: and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And He asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ.

Matt. xvi. 13-16

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Luke ix. 18-20

And it came to pass, as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him; and He asked them, saying, Who do the multitudes say that I am? And they answering said, John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again. And He said unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

Mark xiv. 29, 30

But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny Me thrice.

Matt. xxvi. 33, 34

But Peter answered and said unto Him, If all shall be offended in Thee, I will

Luke xxii. 33, 34

And he said unto Him, Lord with Thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.

never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.

And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.

It is true that a comparison of the texts of the Synoptic Gospels will also reveal certain characteristics peculiar to each; but the point to which we are now drawing attention is their resemblances. Now, when an exhaustive examination is carried out through the whole of these Gospels, three main facts emerge:

1.—There is certain matter which is common to all three; and this is the Gospel of Mark.* In other words, all that Gospel, with the exception of some thirty verses, is contained in Matthew and Luke; so that if Mark had been lost, we should still have possessed it substantially in the two others, without being aware, so far as the N.T. is concerned, of its ever having existed as a separate document.

2.—There is certain matter common to both Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark.

3.—There is certain matter peculiar to each of these two.

Hence arises the Synoptic Problem: How are these facts to be explained?

* Or, as some think, a still more primitive Mark, the hypothetical basis of our Mark.

1.—As to the matter common to all three—that contained in Mark—although it is, perhaps, still possible to maintain that the text of Mark may have been composed at a later date than the two others, and have been derived from them; yet, on the whole, the priority of Mark stands well established. The arguments on which this conclusion rests are too numerous and too intricate to be reproduced here, but we shall give later on some instances supporting it. Still, both Matthew and Luke appear each to have made independent use of Mark as the basis or framework of their Gospels, as regards the order of events; Luke following it more closely than does Matthew, which gives preference to the logical and the topical over the chronological order.

2.—We have next to consider the matter which is outside Mark, and which is found both in Matthew and in Luke. In explanation of this it is now generally held, not that either copied from the other, but that they, each independently of the other, availed themselves of a document, probably intended originally for Jewish readers, which, unlike the extant Mark, has disappeared, but which is wholly or partially incorporated in their texts. This document is alluded to as Q.* But it is one thing to name a hypothetical document,

* Explained as standing for the German, *Quelle* (= source).

and another thing to determine its contents with precision. But if such a document existed, it must have contained a large number of sayings of our Lord, and since these are closely associated with events, it must have contained narrative portions also.

The question which of the two, Q or Mark, was prior may well be asked at this point. Opinion now inclines to the conclusion, not only that Q is the older document, but that Mark was acquainted with it,* and forbore to quote from it, since his readers might be presumed to be already familiar with it.

3.—But do Mark and Q together account for all that is contained in the Synoptic Gospels? There yet remains certain matter to be considered: (*a*) that which is found only in Matthew, and (*b*) that which is found only in Luke.

(*a*) The matter peculiar to Matthew includes, besides cc. i. and ii., certain miracles and a number of parables: *e.g.*, the Pearl of Great Price, the Unmerciful Servant, the Labourers in the Vineyard, the Ten Virgins, etc.

(*b*) The matter peculiar to Luke is much more extensive, comprising, as it does, rather more than half that Gospel; it includes, besides cc. i. and ii.,

* *cp.* Streeter, *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, p. 176.

most of cc. xiv.-xix., and, among other great parables, those of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Pharisee and the Publican.

Whence, in each case (*a*) and (*b*), was the peculiar matter derived? Was it derived from Q; or ought we to postulate another source or sources? The weight of evidence is rather in favour of concluding that Luke, at any rate, is dependent upon other written documents; certainly the preface to that Gospel (c. i. 1-4) makes allusion to many such possible sources.

We have thus attempted to indicate the character of the Synoptic Problem, and the lines along which a solution has been sought. If, as we have stated, the priority of Mark is to be conceded, that hypothesis will be confirmed on comparing certain passages in Mark with the parallel passages in Matthew; thus:

Mark xiii. 14	Matt. xxiv. 15
But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not (let him that readeth understand).	When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand).

Here it is clear that the sentence in parenthesis —'let him that readeth understand'—is no part of our Lord's discourse; it is a comment added by the writer. But how are we to account for this

addition of the same comment in the same connexion, except on the hypothesis that the one writer copied from the other? Again, compare

Mark iii. 19

And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him.

Matt. x. 4	Luke vi. 16
And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.	And Judas Iscariot, which was the traitor.

We can hardly suppose that the words, in which Judas Iscariot is described in all three lists of the Twelve, are the independent addition of each writer.

That Matthew is dependent upon Mark is still further illustrated by the way in which he appears to have suppressed those passages in Mark, in which our Lord is described as giving expression to various emotions: anger, surprise, etc.

Mark iii. v	Matt. xii. 13 (*cp.* Luke vi. 10)
And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand.	(Omitted.) Then saith He to the man, Stretch forth thy hand.

Mark vi. 6	Matt. xiii. 58
And He marvelled because of their unbelief.	(Omitted.)

Mark viii. 12	Matt. xvi. 1
And He sighed deeply in His spirit.	(Omitted.)
Mark x. 14	**Matt. xix. 14 (*cp.* Luke xviii. 16)**
But when Jesus saw it, He was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children, etc.	(Omitted.) But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, etc.

Besides omitting from Mark such phrases as apparently might derogate from the majesty of our Lord's Person, Matthew either adds to Mark's phrases, exalting Him, and heightening the effect of the Marcan narrative of His acts, or modifies it with the same end in view.

Mark i. 34	Matt. viii. 16
And He healed many that were sick.	And healed all that were sick.
Mark vi. 5	**Matt. xiii. 58**
And He could there do no mighty work.	And He did not many mighty works there.
Mark vi. 44	**Matt. xiv. 21**
And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.	And they that did eat were about five thousand men, beside women and children.
Mark viii. 9	**Matt. xv. 38**
And they were about four thousand.	And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Mark x. 18	Matt. xix. 17
And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? None is good save one, even God.	And He said unto him, Why askest thou Me concerning that which is good? One there is Who is good.*

The natural conclusion from these instances, as well as from what was stated earlier, is that Matthew not only incorporates the matter of Mark but incorporates it in a specifically modified form. Mark, in fact, is re-edited in Matthew. Moreover, it is generally agreed that Matthew was compiled for public use in the Christian assemblies, and for the instruction of new converts. It groups its matter, as we have said, rather on the principle of similarity of subject, than according to order in time. Its most striking addition to Mark is that contained in cc. v. to vii.—the great collection of our Lord's sayings known as the Sermon on the Mount. Considerable portions of this, though they appear also in Luke, are scattered over that Gospel in various chapters and in different contexts. In contrast to Matthew, Luke is in the form of an epistle, written for the information of a certain convert, named Theophilus. Its preface leaves us to infer that the author put forth his work as a historical

* The marginal note in *R. V.* here runs: 'Some ancient authorities read, Why callest thou Me good? None is good save one, even God.'

compilation based on a number of documents. Of these documents we may be certain that Mark was one.

When we deal with documents which purport to record historical events, we ask on what evidence the documents are based; and, if the writers were not themselves eye-witnesses of the events they record, on what kind of witness they relied for their statements. When that question is asked in reference to the Synoptic Gospels, we reply that Matthew, indeed, nowhere claims to be a first-hand narrative, while Luke himself distinctly states that he relies on the evidence, which he had scrupulously investigated, of others who were themselves eye-witnesses. Mark is in a rather different position. There is recorded in c. xiv. 51, 52, the striking episode of 'a certain young man' who followed Jesus to the Garden and who hurriedly fled on His arrest. Unless the young man was the author himself, John Mark, there seems to be little or no point in relating the incident; but if we may infer that he was the author, then Mark may have been an eye-witness of the events, at least, of the Passion, the story of which occupies as much as a third part of his Gospel.

A very ancient tradition has it that Mark contains the teaching of St. Peter; but, whether that

be so or not, it contains the stories which must have been often told and repeated in early Christian circles. Certainly it is very close in time to the days of Jesus; it preserves some of the Aramaic words He actually uttered, *e.g. Talitha cumi;* and it expresses the current Jewish and Messianic ideas. Similarly it may be said of Q, that the literary forms both of discourse and parable which are assigned to it point unmistakably to an early origin.

Although it may never be possible to reconstruct from the Gospels a scientifically accurate history of our Lord's life and ministry, or to determine the exact relation of the ethical and the eschatological elements in His teaching, yet we do clearly see the beginnings of that tremendously wonderful impression which He left on His disciples and of that unique belief in Him, which is of the essence of Christianity. And different though John's presentment of Him may be from that of the Synoptic Gospels, as we indicated at the outset, yet the Christian consciousness has felt no difficulty in recognizing the identity of the Person of Jesus in both.

VI

PROPHECY AND APOCALYPTIC

A CONSIDERABLE portion of the O.T. is taken up with writings of the Prophets. These, as we have already pointed out, form the second of the three parts of which the Hebrew O.T. consists. In any review of the literature of the Bible they will be recognized as standing in a class apart from the rest by reason both of their form and of the character of their contents.

The history of Israel, recorded in the Bible, brings into prominence three great types of national leaders: the King, the Priest, and the Prophet. We deal here with the Prophet. As for the Hebrew word (*nābî*), translated 'prophet', it is uncertain what it connotes precisely; but, whatever its meaning may be, it is a term of comparatively late appearance. Originally the prophet was called a 'seer' (1 Sam. ix. 9); but although that name, as we are told, fell into disuse, it did still to the end very fitly describe the prophet, who was, indeed, a seer of visions. Where the people

were blind, seduced into the idolatrous practices of other religions or into the merely formalist observance of their own, sunk in vice and social corruption, deluded with false hopes, and beguiled into a specious but baseless, confidence in some foreign alliance, the prophet saw. He was no mere interpreter of omens, divining the future from such signs as might be revealed by inspecting the entrails of sacrificial victims, or by observing the flight of birds. If, like Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 29) or like Elijah (1 Kings xxi. 19), he spoke in oracles, he was no oracle-monger, dealing in ambiguities whose meaning might be twisted either way. He saw into the future, for he believed himself to have been admitted into the secret counsels of Jahveh. Thus Amos, the earliest of the writing prophets (*circ.* 760 B.C.) says: 'Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets' (iii. 7).

The prophet knew himself as a man of GOD, for to him it was given to have seen the Lord (Amos ix. 1; Is. vi. 1). When he speaks, his words are not his own, but Jahveh's (Jer. i. 9); the message with which he is charged he utters without fear; he speaks before kings; he is bold because he can say: 'The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me' (Is. lxi. 1). His message was often a

prediction of the overthrow of the nation; yet even with this solemn warning there was always held out the hope of deliverance and salvation through repentance; and if, in spite of threats and warnings, destruction should overtake them, the conquering power is still but an instrument in the hands of Jahveh. And from first to last, from Amos to Malachi, there is a constant looking forward to 'the Day of the LORD' when He will manifest Himself in power, and vindicate His righteousness.

The prophet's mission, then, was twofold; yet, in either case, whether he was predicting events still hidden from other men's eyes, or denouncing the glaring evils around him, his message was primarily to the men of his own day. And he himself was a man, a gifted man, indeed, but not a supernatural being. When, in an ecstasy, he describes his visions, or when he utters his reproaches, his warnings, his consolations—the spirit of GOD moving him and giving him utterance—his writings are still human writings, in each case distinguished by a characteristic imagery, style and diction, and are properly subject to the kind of criticism to which all literature is subjected by honest and competent scholars. Such criticism of his writings shows him, in one aspect, to have been a far-sighted statesman, reviewing the situ-

ation of home and foreign affairs with the eyes not of an opportunist politician, but of one who claims to have seen the LORD.

When the Book of Isaiah is critically examined, it is found to fall into two main sections (i. to xxxix. and xl. to lxvi.), the second of which makes no claim to be the work of Isaiah, and indeed, could not have been written by him, as the internal evidence of language and historical standpoint amply demonstrates. It is separated by an interval of at least one hundred and fifty years from the first section. In that interval vast changes had occurred in the world. The call of Isaiah took place in 740 B.C. and his writings cover a period of forty years; for it was in 701 that he predicted the sudden and utter destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib (c. xxxvii.). The empire of Assyria fell, to be succeeded by that of Babylon (607), by which power the Jewish people were finally (586) carried away captive. But the triumph of Babylon was not for long; Cyrus appeared in 555 B.C. and with his advent new hopes arose for the Jewish exiles in Babylon. It is at this time (*circ.* 540) that the Deutero-Isaiah, as he is called, began to put forth that wonderful series of prophetical writings—there is nothing nobler or more sublime in the whole range of the O.T.—which comprise the second section. From

these writings it is evident that the Jews are now in exile (c. xlvii. 6, etc.), and that the city of Jerusalem and the temple have long been in ruins. (c. lviii. 12, etc.). The historical position is utterly different from that of the first Isaiah.* As Isaiah addressed his contemporaries, bidding them not to quail before the power of Assyria, so Deutero-Isaiah addressed his contemporaries, encouraging them from the first with the prospect of the imminent fall of Babylon, and then with the promise of the triumph of Cyrus, who is Jahveh's 'shepherd' (c. xliv. 28), and of the certainty of their return to restore their city and rebuild their temple. This second prophet, too, has his moral and spiritual message, his fervent exhortations to the people to prepare themselves for so great a future by seeking the LORD and forsaking their evil ways (c. lv. *ff.*).

The prophets, while predicting the course of events which they see must inevitably follow upon the particular state of affairs, social, political and religious, in their own age, do yet look forward to a consummation of all history in a stupendous theophany, a manifestation of GOD in His righteousness and power. They proclaim 'the Day of the LORD', from Amos (v. 18 *ff.*) onward, as we

* There is, however, at least one passage (c. xiii. to c. xiv. 23) in the first section which belongs to the period of exile.

have already stated. While by the people, suffering defeat and oppression, it was generally interpreted as the divine intervention, in their behalf, to overthrow their enemies and to restore the throne of David, to the prophets it meant even more than this. To them the Day of the LORD was a day of judgement, near at hand, to be revealed with catastrophe and terror, involving all the nations of the world; and yet, when the terrific crisis was over, ushering in a new era, the Messianic age, by the establishment in Jerusalem of a divine kingdom of righteousness. Israel, the people of GOD, no longer faithless and rebellious, were to be restored to their own land, Canaan, where, victorious over their enemies, they would dwell for ever in peace and joy, with GOD as King in their midst.

These and such conceptions are described by the term 'eschatological'. Eschatology is the study which is concerned with the last things: the end of the world, the resurrection, the day of judgement, heaven and hell. We have to note the rise of a new literature—'apocalyptic'—in which these were the ruling ideas, a further development of prophecy. Already the prophets had employed these conceptions, but they had done so pre-eminently as moral reformers. Unless their warnings were heeded, unless a spiritual and moral

reformation were whole-heartedly carried out by the people, God would execute the judgement due to a wicked, faithless and apostate nation, even using the heathen nations as the ministers of His vengeance.

But the age of the prophets passed. The Jewish people became once more a subject race, oppressed, persecuted, and outraged in their deepest and most sacred feelings. The ancient empires of Assyria, of Babylon, of the Medes and Persians had given place to the rule of the successors of Alexander, who divided amongst themselves the Macedonian empire. The new literature met the new conditions; for it came with the message of a new and wonderful hope; sorrow and suffering would have an end. Its message, eschatological in matter, was apocalyptic in form. 'Apocalpyse' means revelation, especially revelation by means of striking images, and stupendous visions—often of catastrophic and terrific events, the portentous prelude to the final destruction of Israel's enemies and the establishment of a Messianic kingdom.

We have said that apocalyptic was the outgrowth of prophecy proper. Certainly we find in the prophetical writings the element of that which found such copious expression in the apocalyptic writings. We may illustrate this from Isaiah, especially from that section of the book comprised

in chapters xxiv. to xxvii. Thus: 'And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. . . . Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously' (c. xxiv. 21, 23). Again: 'He hath swallowed up death for ever: and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it' (c. xxv. 8). Once more: 'In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown . . . and they shall worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem' (c. xxvii. 1, 13).

In the Book of Daniel we have apocalyptic in its fully developed form. It is the first—and the greatest—of a long series of such works produced in the course of three centuries. There are reasons for thinking that the book is made up of two separate works: the first ending at the sixth chapter, probably written in Babylon not earlier than 300 B.C., and the remainder in Palestine about

167 B.C. shortly before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is a significant fact that the book is not included among 'the Prophets', but in 'the Writings'—the third division of the Hebrew O.T. Nor is Daniel mentioned among 'the famous men', the national heroes and worthies of Israel, in the long catalogue in Ecclus. xliv. to l. (*circ.* 200 B.C.). Both its linguistic peculiarities and its historical anomalies show that the book could not have been written by a Daniel living at Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, or, later, under Cyrus in the sixth century B.C., but rather, (the latter section, at least), by one living in Palestine in the frightful times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and anxious to encourage his persecuted compatriots to be constant in their faith.

The critical conclusion in favour of the late date is no new inference, for it was reached by Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus (*circ.* A.D. 300). In a series of visions the author of Daniel beholds a succession of world-powers, Babylonian, Median, Persian, Macedonian. The most historically detailed of these visions is that contained in the eleventh chapter, where, under the form of prediction, there is an outline of the history of the times of Alexander and his successors, given with a particularity which, if we are to be guided by the example of all prophecy in the O.T., precludes

the authorship of a writer in the remote days of Cyrus at the rise of the Persian empire. In that chapter there are direct references to Antiochus Epiphanes and his expeditions against Egypt, and to his subsequent outrages on the Jewish religion (c. xi. 31; *cp.* c. viii. 11 *ff.*), especially in setting up 'the abomination of desolation'—a small heathen altar placed upon the altar of burnt-offering in the temple of Jerusalem. It is contrary to all we know of prophecy elsewhere in the O.T. that a prophet should utter such detailed predictions to be realized only after the lapse of four centuries. The prophet, as we know, was always the great moral teacher of his day; with what moral force, then, could such predictions of events of so remote a future appeal to his contemporaries? To put the case to ourselves: how could we be affected, for either good or ill, by being informed of what would happen in A.D. 2300, even if we believed what we were told?

The author of Daniel writes, we say, in the midst of the persecution of his people, to inspire them with a transcendental hope. Bitter and furious though the persecution is, it shall have an end before long. The limit is even fixed as 'a time, times and half a time' (c. vii. 25, *cp.* c. xii. 7), or, more definitely, 1,290 days (c. xii. 11—extended in ver. 12 to 1,335 days). At the end

of that period, 'the little horn' (c. vii. 8; c. viii. 9) with 'a mouth speaking great things', that is, Antiochus Epiphanes, shall perish miserably. 'A son of man'—that is, the ideally human, as contrasted with the ideally bestial, the character of the four empires which have come to an end)—will appear from heaven; a fifth kingdom will be established, the kingdom of 'the saints of the Most High', who are personified in him, will be set up; there will be a resurrection of Israel, of both the faithful and the unfaithful, a judgement, and, to crown all, a divine dominion that shall be everlasting and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed.

The Apocalypse of John, the Book of Revelation, is separated from Daniel by an interval of more than two centuries during which many Jewish apocalyptic writings had appeared. Although Revelation is the only apocalyptic book in the N.T. yet the N.T. contains apocalyptic fragments elsewhere in its pages: the so-called 'Little Apocalypse' in Mark xiii.; the Pauline apocalypse in 1 Thess. iv. 15 *ff.*; and that of 2 Peter iii. 5 *ff.* Not only is Revelation indebted to Daniel for much of its matter, but it resembles it in its general purpose; both were written to inspire those under persecution with fortitude, consolation and hope; in both there is promise of speedy deliverance in the revelation from heaven of a

divine kingdom overthrowing the earthly and demoniacal powers after a period of exceptional suffering and horror; in both this period is given as three-and-a-half years.

The twelve last chapters of Revelation contain visions, weird, fantastic, and horrible. The author, working, as he did, upon older, chiefly Jewish, material, has, no doubt, softened down some of the predictions of the torments there described as reserved for the enemies of GOD'S people. Yet a good deal remains which expresses, in the fierceness of its language, the prevailing ideas of retributive justice. Thus, we read that those who worship the Beast are to be tormented for ever and ever with fire and brimstone 'in the presence of the holy angels'—that is, of GOD—and 'in the presence of the Lamb' (c. xiv. 10, 11); though the author does not tell us who are to be the agents of this unspeakably awful punishment. Such terrible imagery might not be amiss in a Book of Enoch, but it is irreconcilable with Christian thought and feeling, for it is difficult for a Christian to imagine how the holy angels, or anybody else, could be happy, or, we might add, not suffer demoralization, as continuous spectators of never-ending torment.

The persecuting power, as described in Revelation, was twofold: the great red Dragon,

Satan, is the transcendental enemy; the Beast, whose authority is derived from the Dragon, is the earthly enemy, the Roman imperial power, personified in Domitian. He, the great adversary of the Christians, blasphemously arrogates divinity to himself, demanding from them, on pain of death, the offering of incense and of worship to himself as Lord and GOD. The choice between Cæsar and Christ was thus for them an issue of life and death.

The Beast has a mystic number, 666 (c. xiii. 18). This number stands for 'Cæsar Nero'; for if that name is written in Hebrew characters, and the numbers denoted by the several letters are added up, (each Hebrew letter expressed a particular number), they come to that total. 'Nero', however, is not Nero as he was first living upon earth, but a 'Nero Redivivus', who would return and fight against the Christians, captained by the Messiah from heaven. The conflict would take place at the tremendous battle of Har-Magedon (Armageddon), the mountain of Megiddo. To the Jew that name was one for ever associated with the memory of a glorious triumph (Judges v. 19). Here, then, at a second Megiddo, GOD's people would triumph, Christ would be finally and for ever established as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and His people would reign with Him in

eternal bliss and glory in the resplendent City of God.

It is impossible here to describe, still less to attempt to interpret, the many visions in this remarkable book, or to criticize the explanations of them offered by various schools of interpretation. For us it is sufficient to take the author at his word, and to accept what he is so careful to assert and to reiterate: that he speaks of things that 'must shortly come to pass' (Rev. i. 1, etc.). Once we neglect this guiding principle, laid down by the author himself, at the very beginning of his work, we may be at the mercy of any wild, yet plausible, scheme. At every great historical crisis there have been commentators eager to identify the Beast with some prominent person regarded by them as the particular antichristian adversary of the day. In the Middle Ages it was Mahomet; to the Protestants of the Reformation it was the Pope; a century and more ago it was Napoleon—not to mention other, still more ludicrous, identifications. The visions and symbols, the sublime and terrific imagery; the prognostications of the End, which we find in Revelation, have made its symbolism, equally with that of Daniel, an enigma to successive generations of readers. But, be the enigmas what they may, it still holds true that, in any attempt to solve them, we can remain on firm

ground only so long as we bear in mind that both were written with the definite purpose of meeting a particular critical situation. Like Daniel, Revelation was primarily a 'tract for the times'. This is not to minimize those permanent elements in it which are of inestimable spiritual value. Just as it begins with the utterance of a great promise: 'Behold, I come quickly,' so it ends with the response of an enthusiastic faith: 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' And it must ever remain a cherished possession of the devout Christian, if for no other reason, than for its sublime and majestic representation of the triumphant and glorified Jesus.

VII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages we have endeavoured, however briefly, to set forth some of the principal results of the modern literary criticism of the Bible. At the same time it must be admitted that they do not command the assent of everybody. While some who are opposed to them advance reasoned arguments for dissenting from them, there are others who urge no sounder or better reasons for their opposition than the stern and unbending refusal to listen to anything so subversive of the deeply-rooted convictions of a lifetime. The refusal to listen to argument, however laudable may seem to be the motive from which refusal springs, is much more often the mark of a weak than of a strong case. In the present instance it may spring from nothing but the kind of idolatry which consists in that worship of the letter of the English Authorized Version of 1611, which regards it as another Ark of the Covenant too holy to be touched, and which

condemns any hand laid upon it as profane and sacrilegious.

It is impossible for any critic of wise and generous spirit not to feel a certain sympathy with those who see their long-cherished convictions in danger of being shattered and who fear that the solid ground on which they have stood from childhood is being sapped beneath their feet. More than that, it is equally impossible for any thoughtful person not to realize the influence which A.V. has exercised for centuries over all sorts of people in every part of the world, or not to recognize how its words have proved a never-failing source of comfort in sorrow, of help in temptation, of strength in weakness, of inspiration to holy living amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life. The critic, of all men, does not hide from himself the fact that his work does in some quarters—quite without solid foundation, he is sure—give rise to fears that the good influence of the Bible may thereby be weakened and impaired.

But wherever else such fears might arise, they ought never to be entertained by any one who really believes that the Bible contains a revelation of GOD to man. He who holds this belief has the least to fear from the enquiries and criticisms, whose only object is the ascertainment of the truth; rather will he welcome the scholarly

criticism which he is convinced cannot do otherwise than confirm that belief. Be that as it may, the Bible, beyond all controversy, is unique in the literature of the world. It is sometimes, rather airily, classed with the Koran, and with the sacred books of India and the Far East; but the Koran is not unfitly described by Carlyle as 'a wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite: endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement: most crude, incondite: insupportable stupidity, in short!' and Max Müller has said: 'If you want to show the divine superiority of the Bible, place it among the sacred books of the East'; a superiority, we may add, which is not least apparent in the indispensable union on which it everywhere insists, of religion with morality, of a true faith with a good life. It is a great book; and it is due to its very greatness that men should seek to know all that can be known about it. It is to pay it a very ill compliment to wish to withdraw it from the kind of criticism to which in common with all ancient literature it is subjected by those competent for the task.

Moreover, there is a moral obligation to seek a solution for the problems it raises, some of which we have already discussed. We ought not to shut our eyes to the historical and religious questions it provokes. To hear some people talk, it might be

imagined that its difficulties were the wanton invention of hostile and impious minds; but the truth is that the problems that call for solution are raised by the Bible itself; they are not imported from outside and thrust into its pages. The man who is honest with himself must seek the solution; and if he says he 'believes the Bible', he owes it to his own self-respect, if to nothing else, to do so. He, at least, knows that difficulties are not solved by ignoring them, and that no real satisfaction can result from the lazy indolence which treats them as if they did not exist. Nor can he, conscious in his soul of the greatness of the Bible, acquiesce for a moment in the ignorant and foolish violence of those who, at one fell swoop, reject the whole of this wonderful literature as a farrago of superstitious fancies variegated with immoral and incredible stories.

There are questions of morality, such as that raised in the O.T. by the indiscriminate massacre of the Canaanites, or the treachery of Jael, to mention only two. To such questions we have already given the kind of answer that the Bible itself supplies in teaching that the revelation of God was partial and gradual; not all at once nor at the beginning was He made known even to His own chosen race as a God of absolute righteousness and unfailing love. And if we go on to ask,

Why not? Why was not the full light shed abroad at the first? it is as though we should ask, Why were not the highest forms of life created at the first? Why did they not appear, why were the conditions such that they could not appear, until after a long, evolutionary process?

There are questions involving the order of Nature, such as that raised by the statement that the sun and the moon stood still, or by the story of Jonah. Was the revolution of our earth and of the moon in their orbits round the sun really interrupted at the command of Joshua? Was a man really swallowed by a great fish, and did he live in its belly three days and three nights? It is no answer to retort, as is sometimes done and with a sort of righteous indignation, Do you, then, not believe in GOD? Do you, then, not believe that Almighty GOD could have done these things? That is no answer, I say, because it confuses two things: the power of GOD to do a thing, and the evidence that He exercised that power on a particular occasion in a particular manner. And here the evidence is entirely unsatisfactory and inconclusive. The statement that the sun and the moon stood still is poetry; in R.V. it is set out as poetry; it is quoted from a source to which we have referred already, the ancient Book of Jashar; and it ought to be regarded as the imaginative language

in which poets of all ages have expressed themselves, and not as the sober, matter-of-fact prose of history. As for the story of Jonah; that has been shown to be part of a didactive narrative of which even the historical basis remains uncertain.

If we are candid and intelligent readers of the Bible it is such problems as these that we are bound to face; we feel that they are not to be shelved, but to be solved. And we are assured that they are not to be solved by the theories of extremists at either end. On the one hand we are invited to reject, as mere superstition, the notion that there is any specifically divine element in the Bible at all, and to say with the poet:

> The revelation of devout and learn'd,
> Who rose before us and as prophets burn'd
> Are all but stories which, awoke from sleep,
> They told their comrades, and to sleep return'd.

On the other hand, we are invited to accept the rigid, mechanical, long-since exploded theory of a Verbal Inspiration which maintains that all in the Bible is divine, and hence infallible. We say 'long-since exploded', for the science of textual criticism, exhibiting multiple variations of texts and the competing claims of various readings, has knocked the bottom out of that theory, even if that theory were not highly improbable antecedently.

Between the Scylla of 'nothing divine' and the Charybdis of 'everything divine' we find a true, as well as a safe, course in recognizing 'the human element' in the Bible. It is the course prescribed for us both by general considerations and by an intelligent study of the books themselves. The writers and compilers of these books—for, etymologically, the very name, Bible, is originally a plural (*Biblia*)—were men. In becoming the exponents of divine truth, they did not cease to be men; they were not set free from the limitations, which, in different degrees, are the conditions of every human activity. Though there is abundance of evidence from their writings to show to every spiritually responsive mind that the range of their natural faculties was extended and their spiritual insight quickened under the influence of the Divine Spirit, yet each writer lives in his own universe of ideas, which he expresses in his own distinctive style; each writer is dependent for his knowledge of historical events and conditions upon the materials under his hand; each writer belongs to his own age.

The emphasis which to-day is laid upon this human element—the partial, limited and fallible element—in the written Word is no specious or plausible expedient summoned hastily to our aid, in order to explain our perplexities. It was recog-

nized even by Christians of the first century with respect to the O.T. 'Men spake from GOD, being moved by the Holy Spirit,' we read (2 Peter i. 21); where in the English of R.V. and still more clearly in the Greek of the original, 'men' is emphatic by position. Though the origin of the revelation was not the 'will of man,' but the Spirit of GOD, yet the instrument through which it was made known was, after all, human. Similarly, St. Paul speaks of our having 'this treasure'—the Divine Light shining in our hearts as the source of our knowledge of GOD—'in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. iv. 7).

The gain to us from the acknowledgment of this principle is far-reaching. Not only are we thereby enabled to read the Bible without suffering such a strain upon our reason and conscience as otherwise we could not escape from; not only does the Word of GOD, contained in the Bible, come home to us with greater power and deeper conviction; but we acquire a new freedom of thought. Religious controversialists in the past have been only too ready to bludgeon their opponents with a single text, torn from its context, isolated from its literary and historical associations, stripped of its true significance and real value, and then wielded as if it carried with it the concentrated authority of the Word of GOD. The wise, enlightened and

patient criticism of the Bible which analyses its contents and succeeds in recognizing the human element within it, even if it did no more, would, we think, be entitled to the gratitude of every honest seeker after truth.

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